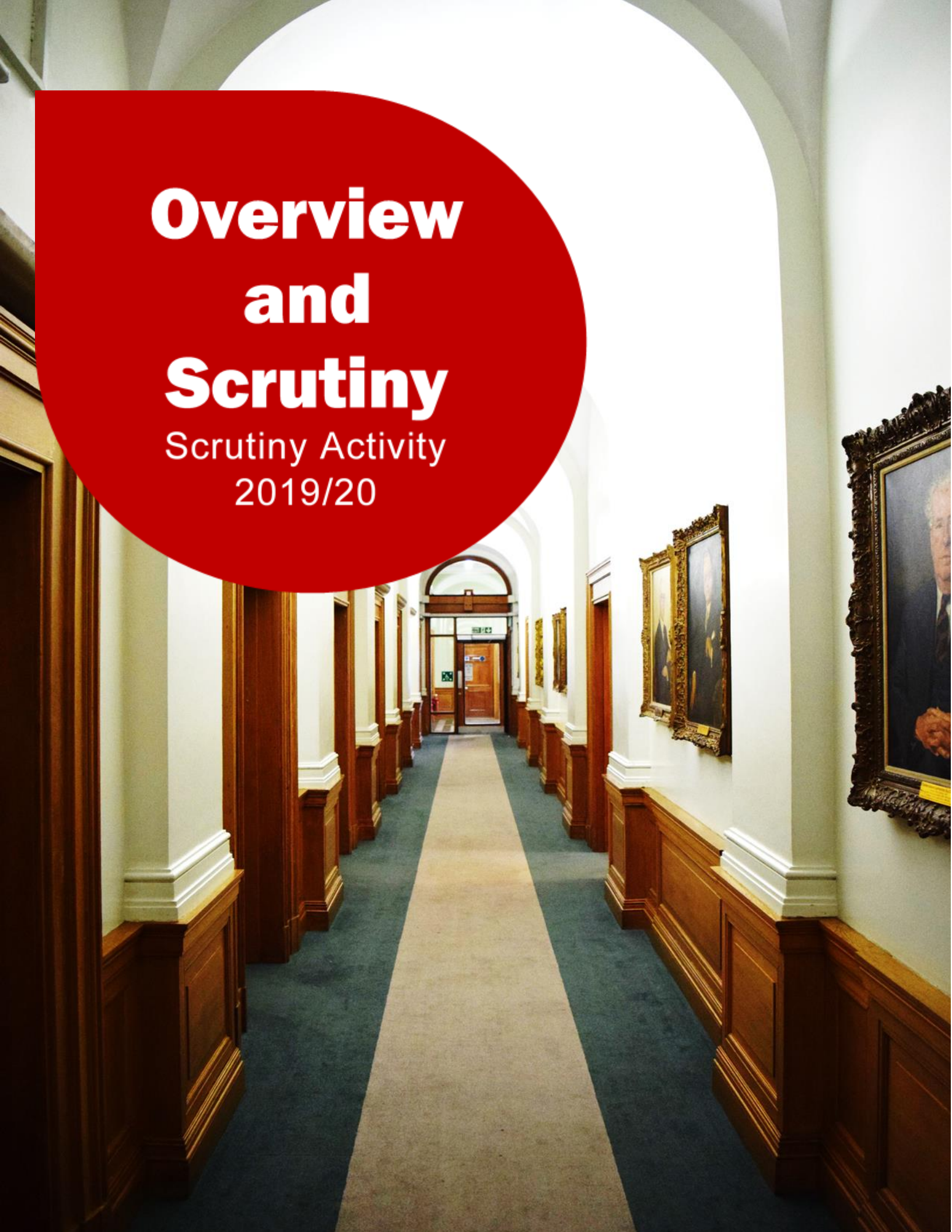


# **Overview and Scrutiny**

Scrutiny Activity  
2019/20



# Introduction

By Scrutiny Board Chairman, Councillor Jill Reeves



I am pleased to present this report on scrutiny activity at Essex County Council over the past year. We have followed the same approach as last year, presenting a summary of work undertaken and various outcomes, whilst highlighting key issues from each committee and areas where scrutiny has made an impact.

Each of the scrutiny committees have had a busy year working with a broad range of issues affecting the Council, its services and local people. As a result, our scrutiny committees must rise to the challenge and address more cross-cutting issues as well as to react to events and to a changing environment. This requires greater planning and depth of understanding than ever before. In 2019, the Statutory Scrutiny Guidance was updated for the first time since 2006. This provided a useful opportunity to reflect and I was pleased that our working arrangements already substantially aligned with best practice.

There are significant issues and cost pressures facing Essex County Council and it is the role of scrutiny to work to hold the Executive to account on behalf of the residents we represent. It is important to remember that scrutiny can be a valuable extra resource in giving issues prominence and transparency whilst also helping to address these corporate challenges through delivering policy change and encouraging further partnership working. It is essential therefore that scrutiny continues to be involved early in the development of policy and has the opportunity to help shape it.

I am proud of scrutiny's achievements over the past twelve months and I would like to thank officers, partners and Members for their commitment, support and contribution to the success of the scrutiny process in 2019-20. I am sure that the same dedication will be shown to scrutinise the work of the Council and external partners during the year ahead



**Councillor Jill Reeves**  
**Scrutiny Board Chairman**

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# Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee reviews the overall strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Cabinet and Council including the budget strategy, financial resources, equality and diversity issues, procurement and the Council's transformation programme.

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's website - [Please click here](#)



Chairing the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee will always present unique challenges. As the primary source of scrutiny to the council's management and internal processes we are solely placed to hold the executive to account on how ECCs workforce is led, the corporate transformations that we go through and, perhaps most importantly, the council's annual budget programme. This year was no different, and I'm proud of the knowledge and experience that my committee brought to the table as we approached our 'business as usual' responsibilities in new and innovative ways.

Alongside this, we've also been able to manage our work programme to allow us to look at much more, carrying out deep dive sessions on issues such as ECCs procurement processes, our property portfolio and commercial investment strategy and the council's response to Brexit. In all of these areas we received fantastic guidance and evidence from officers and I'd like to thank them for supporting our role as scrutineers. We have some of the most talented and passionate public servants working here at ECC, and it's always a pleasure to work with them to deliver the best services we can to Essex residents.

As always, the commitment and dedication of my committee is mirrored in the quality of work we've been able to undertake and the outcomes and assurances we've secured. My heartfelt thanks go to all of them for another engaging and insightful year of scrutiny. I look forward to new challenges and opportunities in the year ahead. - *Councillor Mike Mackrory – Chairman*

## Membership

Councillor Michael Mackory (Chairman)	Councillor Valerie Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor James Abbott	Councillor John Moran
Councillor Malcolm Buckley	Councillor Ron Pratt
Councillor Graham Butland	Councillor Andrew Sheldon
Councillor Mike Garnett	Councillor Mike Steptoe
Councillor Michael Hardware	Councillor Anne Turrell
Councillor Malcolm Maddocks	Councillor Julie Young (Vice-Chairman)



# Health Overview

## Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee reviews and scrutinises matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County of Essex. This includes primary, secondary, tertiary care, and public health, and may involve reviewing the work of commissioners (such as local clinical commissioning groups), providers of health services (such as hospitals) and other organisations in the health sector

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's website - [Please click here](#)



Essex has one of the most complex health environments in the country. In recent years it has been split across three different strategic health footprints that do not align with our county council borders. These health footprints were originally called Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (now moving towards being Integrated Care Partnerships) and they plan to reconfigure and find more efficient and effective delivery of health services to relieve demand pressures, particularly on the acute hospitals. The footprints have been operating at different speeds meaning that the HOPSC has the ongoing challenge of continuing to have strategic oversight over these different paced programmes.

I am particularly pleased that we have worked with health scrutiny members from other authorities, where we have been able to, sometimes formally in a Joint Committee and at other times less formally through joint site visits and this is something I hope will continue. I particularly appreciate the work of the Joint Committee we currently have operating with Suffolk health scrutiny committee which is looking at local service reconfiguration proposals for Suffolk and North East Essex. I am grateful to Councillor Brown for her leadership of that. In the last year that Joint Committee has worked hard to challenge the local service proposals, how public engagement is undertaken and that the proposed changes are sustainable.

The Joint Committee has detailed work on hospital transport planned for the coming months. With the increasing focus on these strategic footprints within the health service, the HOPSC has sought to continue to highlight any fragmentation of service consistency across the county and encourage pan Essex approaches where possible.

I would like to thank all my HOPSC members for their commitment over the last year and especially those that have volunteered to also serve on Joint Committees and who participate in additional activities such as extra briefings and site visits to broaden their knowledge and expertise.

*Councillor Jill Reeves – Chairman*

### Membership

Councillor Jill Reeves (Chairman)	Councillor June Lumley	<b>District Councillors</b>
Councillor Anne Brown	Councillor Bob Massey	Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor Jenny Chandler	Councillor Maggie McEwen	Councillor Andrew
Councillor Beverly Egan (Vice Chairman)	Councillor John Moran	Councillor Michael Helm
Councillor Ricki Gadsby	Councillor Mark Stephenson	
Councillor Dave Harris	Councillor Andy Wood (Vice Chairman)	

# People and Families

## Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee exercises the scrutiny function on matters relating to children and young people, families, education, adult social care, special needs and safeguarding.

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's website - [Please click here](#)



The committee has developed an ambitious work programme balancing the very different aspects of a challenging and wide remit. This report highlights some of the wide-ranging work undertaken by the Committee.

I am proud that issues with respite care raised by the public were considered by decision-makers in line with a key principle of good scrutiny defined by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Public engagement is important as we challenge decision-makers, particularly engagement from more vulnerable members of the community. Scrutiny needs to demonstrate that it adds value and this was a good example of making a difference. Engagement with the public voice is also key in our work with Healthwatch Essex, for instance considering anecdotal case studies from service users alongside information from commissioners and providers to better inform our scrutiny work.

With an ageing population and rising demand for adult social care, the Committee is spending more time on this area, for instance in considering a draft proposal to refocus the Day Opportunities service for older people and adults with disabilities. Importantly, this was ahead of the Cabinet decision and I would encourage decision-makers to grasp the opportunity to embrace scrutiny involvement in policy development at an early stage.

Last year, I reported that we were commencing a review of the multi-agency response to drug gangs, knife crime and county lines. This has taken place and the report should be published in May. The Group's recommendations encourage greater accountability and co-ordination of services, greater focus on early prevention, clearer communications and further partnership working. PAF may continue to have oversight of the multi-agency response to this worrying issue.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my committee for their commitment to their work. I am pleased that the Committee is challenging and influencing decision-makers and increasing its profile both internally and externally. - *Councillor Jenny Chandler – Chairman*

### Membership

Councillor Jenny Chandler (Chairman)	Councillor June Lumley	Councillor Clive Souter
Councillor Graham Butland	Councillor John Baker (Vice Chairman)	Councillor Carole Weston
Councillor Jude Deakin	Councillor Peter May	Education Rep Richard Carson
Councillor Beverley Egan	Councillor Maggie McEwen	Education Rep Lee Cromwell
Councillor Carlo Guglielmi	Councillor Ron Pratt	Education Rep Marian Lizzell
Councillor Jeff Henry	Councillor Patricia Reid	

# Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee exercises the scrutiny function on matters relating to environment, economic growth and infrastructure, sustainability, highways and transportation, libraries, planning communities, waste and recycling and trading standards. Full details of the Committee's work over the period can be found on the Council's website - [Please click here](#)



It's been another interesting year for the Committee. This report outlines some of our key challenges and successes and I'm glad that colleagues and members of the public will have the opportunity to see a broad overview of the work that we do as scrutineers.

As always, the broad remit of this committee consistently presents challenges in establishing our priorities for scrutiny, but it also opens up opportunities to explore a wide range of the interesting and vital services that we deliver for Essex Residents. This year we've explored operational issues such as how our highways and country parks are maintained and how our elderly and vulnerable residents access public transport. We've explored the work of partner organisations such as the SELEP and how this impacts on the skills, prosperity and productivity of the Essex workforce. We've also increasingly ensured that the environment is at the heart of our work programme, looking at the Essex Green Strategy and how we can work better with district and borough partners to push forward with a cohesive green agenda.

I'm particularly pleased of how we've sensitively navigated a number of difficult and high profile issues, providing effective scrutiny under pressure. The Essex Future Libraries Strategy, for example, called for a considerable change to 'business as usual' scrutiny. While enabling unprecedented public engagement, members of the committee were able to carry out a significant programme of challenge - working constructively with the cabinet member and officers to secure significant assurances and changes to the eventual decision. Taking the work of scrutiny out of County Hall and into our communities is something that I've always been particularly passionate about. That's why I'm also really glad that we've been able to undertake a number of site visits this year to enable our work as a committee. These have included fact finding trips to community run libraries and, more recently, a visit to the DP Open World London Gateway site in Stanford Le Hope. On all occasions, these visits have informed our work and facilitated further topics for the committee to look at in greater detail. I'm looking forward to continuing this trend in the new year.

Effective scrutiny requires us, as local representatives, to move beyond simple challenge, working in concert with officers, Cabinet Members and strategic partners as a critical friend. As always, I'm proud of how members of my committee have drawn upon their experience and local knowledge to provide genuine insight - working constructively and positively as ambassadors for their local communities to add value to the areas we've looked at. With more interesting topics on the horizon, I look forward to another year!

*Councillor Ian Grundy - Chairman*

## Membership

Councillor Grundy (Chairman)	Councillor Hillier (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Pond (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Barry Aspinell	Councillor Paul Honeywood	Councillor Ron Pratt
Councillor Terry Cutmore	Councillor David Kendall	Councillor Wendy Schmitt
Councillor Andrew Erskine	Councillor Bob Massey	Councillor Carole Weston
Councillor Ivan Henderson	Councillor Richard Moore	

# Transform the Council to Achieve More with Less

## **Brexit planning - September**

In September 2019, Members of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee received an update on ECCs readiness for various potential Brexit outcomes and sought assurances on early preparation and contingency plans. Discussions focused on resourcing, procurement, highways and transportation, changes to EU grant funding and future international cooperation around issues such as data sharing, interruptions to usual supply chains and entitlements for residents. Members also discussed the likelihood of disruption to the effective running of Essex ports and the contingency measures in place to ensure access to goods in the event of a 'no deal' outcome.

### ***Members:***



*Provided challenge to Brexit preparations and received assurances that ECC was working effectively with partners, residents and other local authorities to ensure a smooth transition.*

## **Budget**

Members of CPSC trialed a new scrutiny programme to provide critical challenge to the annual budget process. On top of the usual quarterly outturn reports, members of the committee also received additional training and development, enabling them to provide effective financial oversight. This year, members also began scrutiny of the annual budget in September 2019, allowing greater scope to influence the process and properly measure impact.

### ***Members:***



*Have again contributed to ECCs system of checks and balances, receiving assurances that the council's finances are futureproof and that we are offering value for money to Essex residents. The approval of a new programme of oversight ensured that CPSC members formed an integral part of the budget process.*



# Enable Inclusive Economic Growth

## Procurement

In February 2020, CPSC members invited officers to discuss ECC's procurement framework. As part of the discussion members reviewed and discussed the internal audit process that takes place with smaller contracts and the timeliness of benchmarking exercises ahead of contract extension deadlines. Members also made a number of recommendations around how to properly ensure social value is effectively built into future procurement exercises.

### **Members:**



*Contributed to future discussions around the social value of procurement exercises at ECC and received assurances that contracting and contract monitoring are carried out effectively. Members also were able to ensure that CPSC will be factored into upcoming conversations around major individual contract renewals and re-procurement exercises.*

## SELEP

In September 2019, PSEG members invited The Chief Executive of SELEP, alongside Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, to discuss the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership before the scrutiny committee. Members challenged the panel on the SELEP's investment strategy, corporate structure, accountability mechanisms and future growth proposals. Moving forward, it was agreed that greater local authority scrutiny was needed with particular focus on skills and jobs growth and transport infrastructure investment.

### **Members:**



*Agreed a forward work programme for future SELEP scrutiny. This included early sight of the developing skills and productivity plan for input from PSEG members and a visit to the DP World site London Gateway container port in Stanford le hope to see the practical impact of SELEP investment.*

# Help Create Great Places to Grow Up, Live and Work

## Essex Housing Strategy

In January 2020, PSEG received on the Essex Housing Strategy ahead of the launch of the public consultation in February. The strategy outlined the broad housing challenges in Essex, as well ECCs role in supporting districts to deliver their planned housing developments. Members discussed the strategy with witnesses and received assurances around include Planning, infrastructure delivery to support housing growth, suitable housing for vulnerable residents and strategic coordination on crosscutting issues e.g. homelessness prevention, improving health and wellbeing, and integration support for resettled refugees.

### **Members:**



*Were able to add value to the consultation document and provided insight to influence the strategy itself. Members also received assurances around supported housing for vulnerable adults and key workers across the county.*

## Green Essex Strategy

In November 2019, **PSEG** members received an update on the Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy, with officers outlining a high-level vision for the future planning and delivery of green infrastructure in Essex. The strategy outlined how significant investment was planned to restore and develop green spaces across the county and market opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities to Essex residents and visiting tourists. Members discussed the strategy with officers, providing insight and considered how best to support the delivery of proposals.

### **The Committee:**



*Endorsed the strategy, commending officers for their work and made a formal recommendation calling on the cabinet member to increase resource to the green infrastructure team to match the scale and ambition of proposals.*

## SEND services - Care Quality Commission and Ofsted Inspection

The Care Quality Commission and Ofsted raised a number of issues as a result of an inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services in Essex. **PAFPSC** spoke to representatives from the County Council's Children and Families, Education and SEND services and the National Health Service to understand the full context and the challenges being faced by partners.

### **Members:**



*Challenged how all the agencies were responding to the issues raised in the inspection report and encouraged a collegiate 'system' response. Members sought assurances about improving the consistency of services across Essex, improving communications and processes and overcoming any different priorities of partners; and will continue to challenge the progress of improvement actions being taken.*

## **Future Libraries Strategy**

Members of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee provided 'critical friend' challenge to the proposed Future Libraries Strategy. This was a high-profile piece of work, with scrutiny taking place alongside the consultation and decision-making process. The cabinet member attended scrutiny on five occasions to respond to PSEG members. This included a Task and Finish deep dive session and report, reflecting concerns around community run libraries, partnership working and the future direction of the libraries service in Essex.

### ***Members:***



*Following a call-in process the decision was implemented in August 2019. The decision had been substantially amended to reflect the concerns raised by scrutiny members and the Committee were able to successfully secure a number of assurances regarding the future of less attended libraries.*

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# **Help People Get the Best Start and Age Well**

## **Respite Care**

**PAFPSC** acted upon concerns highlighted by the receipt of a petition on the provision of respite care at Lavender House and Maples. It spoke to petitioners, Cabinet Members and Senior Officers and widened the issue to look at the provision and administration of respite care in Essex more generally to provide context to the petitioner's concerns.

### ***The Committee:***



*Provided an opportunity for people to raise their concerns with the Cabinet Member and senior officers in a robust and challenging environment. Members identified actions that needed to be taken including improving the robustness and transparency of the assessment and appeals process for respite care, improving communications with families and carers and providing the opportunity for family and carers to help influence future options for respite care. The intention is to continue to monitor progress being made and to receive regular updates.*

## **Day Opportunities**

**PAFPSC** contributed to the refocussing of a range of services known as 'day opportunities' for adults with disabilities and older people which currently enable them to take part in activities outside their home, as well as enabling a break for family carers. The proposed refocussing of the future service model should increase the number of adults who could be supported into paid employment.

### **Members:**



*Sought assurances that the current varied levels of support for this vulnerable group would continue and highlighted some areas for further development. It was stressed that officers must work with both small and large local employers and was suggested that an accreditation scheme to encourage participation be introduced. Members sought justification for placing the proposed contract with Essex Cares Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the County Council, as opposed to an independent private company. The Committee will continue to monitor the changes being made, particularly how it is aligning with the Council's Meaningful Lives Matter programme.*

### **Partnership working and the relationship with acute hospitals**

The **HOPSC** has sought to further improve stakeholder and partner relationships, joint working and trust as part of the drive to further integration of services. A schedule of hospital site visits is underway to focus on understanding the scale and nature of the challenges being faced at each hospital site and where possible these visits will be joint ones with the health scrutiny committees from neighbouring areas.

### **Members:**



*Increased their understanding of challenges facing Princess Alexandra Hospital in seeking a hospital rebuild programme and the need for refurbishment at Southend Hospital and how some services in future may be delivered differently in partnership with community and other providers. Members were supportive of the changes planned to relieve pressure on elective care, such as the new orthopaedic centre at Braintree Hospital and encouraged the move to more 'system solutions' being found to support hospitals facing particular demand pressures.*

### **Seasonal planning**

To encourage more focus on admission avoidance initiatives, the **HOPSC** has expanded bi-annual operational level discussions on A&E pressures and seasonal planning with both the Ambulance Service and acute hospital trusts in Essex to now include social care.

### **Members:**



*Sought assurances that the system could continue to respond to increasing demand and acuity beyond the levels for which had been planned and that partners could evidence closer system working; and encouraged more consistent use of HALOs across all the hospital sites. The Committee recommended that the ambulance service reviewed its engagement with districts to ensure that the services it linked to (such as those for falls) were coordinated with those offered by districts*

## **Responding to significant reconfigurations**

Significant reconfiguration of acute services is underway as part of planning the long-term health needs of local communities. These changes are being proposed and co-ordinated by either Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships or Integrated Care Systems in one of three 'footprints' crossing the county. Whilst retaining a strategic oversight over all the plans, in some instances, the **HOPSC** has also worked in joint health scrutiny committees with neighbouring authorities to look at the detail of proposals.

### ***The Committee:***



*Have increased transparency and accountability of the STP proposals and enhanced the opportunity for public engagement. Members have supported the principle in Mid and South Essex of stabilising patients with certain complex conditions at local hospital first and then being moved to a specialist clinical centre if necessary and supported the early implementation of some of these changes (e.g. for cardiology care); and have challenged the planning for inter-hospital patient transfers and non-emergency family and friend transport and encouraged the sharing of learning across different STP/ICS footprints.*



# How the Public can get Involved

## Attending a meeting

Members of the public are welcome to attend any public meeting of a scrutiny committee or 'task and finish' group. Public meetings are listed on the [online meeting calendar](#).

All scrutiny committees normally allow 15 minutes for public questions at the beginning of each meeting. If you wish to ask a question, let the Chairman or clerk know in plenty of time before the meeting starts. Public meetings are usually audio recorded and streamed live on the internet. The recording can be found embedded within the web page for each individual meeting, accessed via the link above.

Scrutiny regularly asks organisations or individuals to give evidence at meetings for the purpose of their investigations. If you will be attending scrutiny to give information to a committee, you can find information and guidance about what to expect in the [Scrutiny Handbook](#).

If you would like to feed into the scrutiny process, or suggest a topic for scrutiny's attention, you can get in touch with the Scrutiny Team at [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you can contact any of the Councillors who are on the relevant committee or task and finish group and ask them to consider representing you or calling you to give evidence. You can find out which local Councillors are on which Committee by checking the [website](#).

**This document has been produced by Essex County Council's Democracy and Transparency service. Contact us by email at [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk).**